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# SATURDAYSTAR

WEBSITE PRETORIA NEWS

PERSONAL FINANCE

PRESENT FATHERS RACE CHALLENGE, NEED OUTDOORS | 16

MODEL SEES PAGEANT AS PLATFORM FOR CHANGE | 3

WANATU TAKES LEGAL ACTION AFTER VEHICLE IMPOUNDING | 10

INVESTING IN TOPSY-TURVY TRUMPWORLD | 14

EDUCATION

## OVERCROWDING CRISIS HIGHLIGHTS EDUCATION WOES

80 children crammed into one Grade 1 classroom

ANTON KROONI  
AFRA/PHOTOGRAPHIC24

IN A STAKE-HOLDING of South Africa's education crisis, Canyon City Janusz Primary School is a microcosm of the challenges faced by the nation's schools.

An astonishing 80 children are crammed into a single Grade 1 classroom, a situation that has raised grave concerns about the quality of education that young learners receive.

As teachers grapple with the workload, lack of meaningful instruction in such cramped conditions, the dreams of these vulnerable children risk being stifled.

This is just one situation unfolding against the backdrop of President Cyril Ramaphosa's State of the Nation Address on Thursday, where he outlined plans to improve the school system, emphasising the need for expanded investment in early childhood development and a commitment to training more qualified teachers.

However, as classrooms overflow and resources dwindle, the urgent question remains: will these promises translate into real change for South Africa's children?

When the Saturday Star visited the school earlier this week, we counted around 80 children in the classroom we were shown. Far fewer than the 82 noted by the DA during an oversight visit the day before.

The classroom was overcrowded, with learners sitting on the floor or on any surface. Parents who joined outside the school, shared their suspicions that the school had been tipped off about the media visit and had likely made efforts to manage the situation, as conditions had been worse the day before.

Apart from overcrowding, the school

faces a shortage of furniture. Many learners do not have desks, and some teachers have to accommodate three learners at meant for two.

Parents have expressed their dismay over the ongoing admissions challenges, reporting that many of their children are still unplaced.

Katlego Sepele, a 16-year-old school-going girl, secured a spot for her child, revealing the complications she faced with the online application process.

"I applied for my child the first time when I made an appointment with the principal. I had to wait to check my application, I realised they had given space in a school that I didn't apply for. I started applying again and got a change in number last year. I was given numbers until schools opened."

Zoliswa Xave, another parent, expressed her heartfelt regret that her 10-year-old son would have to leave him to crèche again due to financial constraints. Xave wanted him to start Grade 1 at the same school as his brother. "My dad is 5 years older than my husband and our budget is me alone that is heating. So I wanted him to do Grade R here, his brother is here. Grade R here, they told me that they are coming back to the same school here," she said, reflecting the mounting frustrations faced by many parents in the area.

The mad scramble to find a home beyond the crowded classrooms and a shortage of toilets. Parents have noted a severe lack of furniture, with many students forced to share desks or learn outdoors under trees due to the unavailability of adequate classroom space.

Meanwhile, the DA, after undertaking

overnight inspections in Cosmo City, is placing pressure on education officials to respond effectively to the crisis.

The party is calling for immediate action, including the deployment of mobile classrooms and essential resources to better support the burgeoning student population.

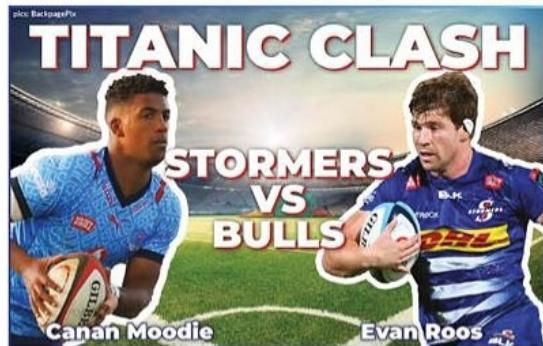
"We demand that the GDE take immediate action by providing additional mobile classrooms and essential resources to address the overcrowding crisis in our schools. We also urge the department to develop a long-term solution to the inadequate facilities, ensuring learners have access to safe and conducive learning environments," said DA Shadow Minister DA Gauteng Shadow MEC for Education, Ntando

Responding to the parents' grievances, Gauteng Department of Education spokesman Steven Molefe acknowledged the overcrowding issue, stating: "We did indicate during the learner placement period that because of previous overcrowding in certain areas, some schools will not be able to take in new learners. We are establishing a satellite school in the said area, which will assist to alleviate pressure from the existing school."

Molefe also addressed allegations of bribery regarding school admissions, inviting parents to provide evidence to investigating officers.

The eighth of South African schools is further hampered by recent incidents, such as the bullying case at Sutherland High School in Centurion, which went viral due to footage showing the victim being beaten. Such occurrences have led to increased public interest in the state of school safety, with the department working to monitor the situation closely and ensure all necessary support measures are executed thoroughly.

See page 4



Bulls ready to silence Stormers home crowd

LEIGHTON KOOPMAN  
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AS South Africa's recent rugby rivalry to take on the Stormers in the highly anticipated United Rugby Championship (URC) derby at Cape Town's packed DHL Stadium this afternoon.

Tickets for the titanic clash are sold out, but the Bulls face a daunting challenge - they've never won a URC match at this venue.

Stormers captain Salmaan Moerat and his team prepared to be backed in front of the "titantic", as the Stormers supporters are known.

"We will be up for it and ready. As a professional, this is why you play the game. We will be in the home stadium, in front of your people."

The Stormers captain vowed they would be up for the challenge and not just bank on their supporters to give them energy.

Bulls director of rugby Jake White

and his team have other plans, though, reports Adilak Motau.

"It is important to know that rugby is still so important in Cape Town, and also so important when the Bulls come down here," he said.

"I think the best players get used to playing in front of big crowds and big games, the better it is for us going forward," said White. "One with I have for the Bulls is that we play with the same amount of reward to the fixture we are getting from the supporters."

Dricus not a fan-favourite Down Under

ONGAMA GCWAH

DRICUS du Plessis received a rude awakening that he is by no means the fan favourite as he was boozed in the pre-fight press conference on Thursday and in the octagon weigh-in yesterday.

The 31-year-old former SA U21 with a large number of South Africans not pleased with him having publicly shown his support for US President Donald Trump and Ron Paul, who in the past few weeks have attacked South Africa in interviews and on social media.

This will be the first time Du Plessis will walk into the octagon with his crowd on the side lines, as they have been from the beginning of his UFC career almost five years ago.

However, the champion and his coaches believe Monday night's fight against Michael Strickland will be the only fight of the night. With Du Plessis fighting Strickland for the second time, and given that Strickland is the only fighter in the UFC that the South African has failed to either submit or knock out, this particular fight carries more weight for the

fighter and his team.

All his UFC career, Du Plessis has been known as a popular, the most unlikely fighter in a promotion filled with the world's most technical and crisp strikers, wrestlers and grapplers.

As a result, the African crowd is looking to see the Strickland fight show that they too have the technical know-how required to compete at the highest level.

The main card will get underway at Sam SAST and include another title bout as Zhang Weili defends her straw-weight title against Tatjana Soós.

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his hometown in the Eastern Cape, while his childhood friends, Rankwana and Lebura, continue to live in Johannesburg.

Despite the distance, the three have remained closely connected, working together to bring Konto Khalo to life.

Mkonto said: "After we knew

they've set a little deadline; by the end of the year, the business needs to show signs of success, or I might have to go 'find a real job!' It's all in good fun, though, and only fuels Mkonto's determination to make Konto Khalo a success.

#### PAGEANTRY

## Young model embraces pageantry as a platform for change

ANITA NKONKI

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LUYANDA Mthembu, a young and ambitious model, shares her inspiring journey in pageantry and her commitment to uplifting children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Mthembu has secured her place as a finalist in Miss Grand South Africa 2025, and as she prepares for the much-anticipated coronation night on June 28 at Emperors Palace, her focus is firmly set on advocacy, empowerment, and community upliftment.

In a conversation with Saturday Star, the 25-year-old shared her fervent passion for pageantry and the deeper mission behind it, which she says extends far beyond merely securing a title.

"My journey has been one of resilience, passion, and a deep commitment to uplifting others—especially the next generation," she said.

Mthembu captured her journey into pageantry from the tender age of 11. Inspired initially by the reality show *Toddlers & Tiaras*, her interest blossomed as she discovered the inspiring narratives portrayed in contests like Miss South Africa.

A pivotal moment came during Rolene Strauss's iconic Top 5 interview, where the former Miss South Africa emphasised becoming a beacon of hope, a sentiment that sparked Mthembu's ambition to pursue pageantry.

"I knew then that this was something I wanted to pursue one day," she recounted, reflecting on the profound impact of Strauss's words.

Her passion further intensified upon meeting Ntandoyenkosi Kunene, Miss South Africa 2016, who visited Mthembu's high school, sharing her tale and encouraging young girls to chase their dreams.

"Meeting her in person confirmed so much for me about the kind of impact I want to have on others one day. Until that moment, pageantry had felt out of reach, but suddenly, it felt possible. Even though I was hesitant to take the leap, my mom, my biggest supporter—entered me, knowing how much this dream meant to me. Now that I'm here, I'm embracing every part of the journey with excitement and determination, ready to grow through this incredible experience," she noted.

Her advocacy focuses primarily on protecting and uplifting children from displaced and disadvantaged backgrounds.

"I am passionate about ensuring these children have access to the resources, education, and opportunities they need to thrive," she explained.

Mthembu says aims to make a positive impact through community outreach, mentorship, and raising awareness.

"It's about giving them the support and hope they need to succeed and break free from the cycles of hardship they may face," she added.

Reflecting on her path to success, Mthembu attributes much of her progress to her unwavering support system.

"I would attribute my success to my parents, who have always been my biggest supporters, and to the teachers and mentors who've guided me along the way," she expressed.



LUYANDA Mthembu is not just a hopeful contender in pageantry; she is a beacon of inspiration and change for many. | Supplied

## How and your toes show

SMILING at someone at the traffic lights or saying please and thank you should be easy and should come as natural as breathing and here in our country we do it pretty often and way more than they do it in most other parts of the world. Good job us. Kindness, compassion and these little gestures go such a long way.

Today I wanna tell you about angels that fly among us with invisible wings and superheroes who don't wear capes (but totally should). If I did five percent of what these blessings do everyday I'd be wearing a cape adorned with glitter and all the sparkles. Let's talk about CHOC Childhood Cancer Foundation especially because Flip Flop Day is just around the corner.

In 1977 Sister Sadie Cutland and her husband Julian's firstborn, Hillary was diagnosed with aplastic anaemia at the age of just seven years old.

A few years later Sadie decided to form a support group composed of parents and volunteers and CHOC was formed in 1979 in Joburg. Thanks to the Cutlands, the volunteers, parents and all the supporters along the way CHOC now supports over 1500 families at any given time.

This foundation offers emotional support to families, accommodation for out-patients and their parents, transport to and from treatment centres, financial bereavement support, meals, care bags and so much more. More importantly than all of the life changing things I've already just mentioned they provide love, kindness, cuddles and a whole lot of hope.

Hope changes everything. That and knowing you're not alone. I have been lucky enough to attend so many of the launches and events throughout the years and I've even cycled amongst those crazy Cows to raise much needed funds to keep it all going.

The crazy CHOC Cows wear their outfits with pride and they deserve a gigantic round of applause for the antics they get up to. The CHOC staff should wear neon capes day and night so that we know who they are at all times so we can give them high fives, hugs and all the love.

Thank you to every single charity worker and caregiver out there for spreading love so unconditionally.

Let Flippie be your Valentine this Friday the 14th. He could even be your "solemate". All it's gonna cost you is R10 so buy your sticker online or at any Tekkie Town outlet and show off your toesies and be solely committed! Have a heart... Wear a sole! More info at choc.org.za or flipflopday@choc.org.za

#### Top SA Tunes Of The Week

Charlie Finch: *Daydreams*

Annabelle: *Oh Rain*

Carmen Rodriguez: *Stay Ready*

Albino Beach: *Circa*

Tyla: *Push To Start*